

(English version)

Question for written answer E-001732/24
to the Commission
Mathilde Androuët (Pfe)
(17 September 2024)

Subject: Are measures that make flying less accessible justified by a hypothetical benefit for the climate?

According to the European Commission, fares for flights within the EU were on average 20 to 30% higher last summer than before the COVID-19 pandemic ⁽¹⁾. This price hike calls into question how accessible flying is as a means of transport, especially in the coming years with the reform of the EU emissions trading system ⁽²⁾, included in the Fit for 55 package ⁽³⁾, and the announced reform of the Energy Taxation Directive ⁽⁴⁾.

Airlines for Europe indicates that compliance with these new rules could cost European airlines 13 to 14 times more in 2030 than in 2019 ⁽⁵⁾. However, according to calculations by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), flights departing from Europe account for 0.3% of global greenhouse gas emissions, with approximately half being generated by flights within the EU ⁽⁶⁾. While taxing this sector would prevent a 0.002 °C increase in temperature in 2100, it would bring about very damaging indirect consequences (job losses and relocation).

Does the Commission consider that this hypothetical and derisory ‘benefit for the climate’ justifies the adoption of self-punitive social and economic measures?

Submitted: 17.9.2024

Answer given by Mr Hoekstra on behalf of the European Commission
(5 November 2024)

EU legislation aims to ensure a balanced contribution of all economic sectors to emission reductions, including aviation. At the same time, the aviation sector continues to experience strong emissions growth.

The EU does not regulate airfares, as it is the airlines that ultimately determine ticket prices. The Commission analyses airfares when assessing policy impacts ⁽¹⁾.

Since 2012, the European Union Emission Trading System (EU ETS) applies to aviation. The 2021 ETS Impact Assessment found very limited impacts of this policy on prices.

For a flight from Paris to Rome estimated ETS costs assuming full auctioning would be around EUR 7.5 ⁽²⁾. As of autumn 2024, there have been no major changes to warrant a price increase ⁽³⁾.

From 2025, ReFuelEU Aviation will increase the share of sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) used on flights taking off from EU airports. The EU ETS supports the uptake of SAF with allowances worth around EUR 1.5 billion ⁽⁴⁾ available for flights covered by the EU ETS for any aircraft operator. Moreover, aviation is eligible for Innovation Fund support, and support derived from Member States’ ETS auction revenues.

On energy taxation, the Commission proposed to end the tax exemption for aviation and set a minimum rate for the fuel used for intra-EU passenger flights to level the playing field for different modes of transport. Discussions in Council are ongoing and the European Parliament will be consulted.

The Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) aims to offset emissions above a certain baseline, which should help level the playing field globally. In 2026, the Commission will carry out an assessment of CORSIA, which might result in further legislative proposals.

¹ Airline fares in EU 20-30% higher this summer than in 2019 — *The Brussels Times* — 10 November 2023.

² Fit for 55: European Parliament adopts key laws to reach the 2030 climate target — European Parliament press release — 18 April 2024.

³ Fit for 55 package: Council reaches general approaches relating to emissions reductions and their social impacts — Ministry of the Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion — 29 June 2022.

⁴ Belgium issues ultimatum over energy tax reform — *Euronews* — 22 April 2024.

⁵ The European Green Deal and the Fit For 55 Package — *AirlinesForEurope* — 11 December 2023.

⁶ IPCC, 6th Assessment Report, Summary for Policymakers, p. 28.

⁽¹⁾ The impact assessment for the latest revision of the European Union Emissions Trading System took into account air fare developments: SWD(2021)603, accessible at : <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021SC0603>
The study underlying this impact assessment also analysed air fare developments: Accessible here: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/471ca3b9-7cca-11ec-8c40-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

⁽²⁾ Assuming 102 kg CO₂ emissions for one passenger, and an ETS price of EUR 75/tCO₂.

⁽³⁾ The ETS continues to apply to flights within the European Economic Area and departing flights to Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

⁽⁴⁾ A total of 20 million allowances have been set aside to support eligible aviation fuels on routes with an ETS surrender obligation. At an allowance price of EUR 75, this is around EUR 1.5 billion.